

**Human  
rights  
West  
Berlin  
style**





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*The scene is West Berlin's Bülowstrasse, Schöneberg borough, at 2.10 p.m. on 22 September 1981.*

*Hundreds of police armed with truncheons, tear gas and water cannon are chasing young people in the direction of the traffic-laden Potsdamer Strasse.*

*With police dogs on his heels, 18-year-old Klaus Jürgen Rattay runs into a bus which drags him along for a while until he is left lying helplessly on the street. A few minutes later he dies. Friends rushing to the scene to help him are clubbed down by the police. So a young man in his prime meets his death in the streets of a city governed by a Senate which never tires of praising West Berlin as an "island of freedom".*

## What had happened?

That morning, on the instructions of the West Berlin Senate, which is dominated by the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), over 2,000 police using bulldozers and armoured vehicles had moved into action to evict groups of squatters. Empty rooms in a number of houses in West Berlin have been occupied by people protesting against capitalist land speculation and exorbitant rents, putting in several months of work to turn these rooms into habitable homes.

With their armoured vehicles the police crashed through the doors, and forced their way into the flats with crowbars, sledgehammers and power saws. The squatters did not offer active resistance. They did not throw stones and did not provoke anyone.

Despite this they were brutally manhandled and forcibly evicted. The police, operating in groups of three and armed with sticks, riot shields and other combat gear, forced the squatters, predominantly young people, to leave their homes.

The tenants were only allowed to take with them the personal belongings they could immediately lay their hands on. Everything else, along with the entire furniture, was destroyed and dumped onto the streets or courtyards. After this, the entrances of the houses concerned were bricked up.

The brutal police raid and the accompanying acts of vandalism were covered by patrolling armoured scout cars in neighbouring streets and marksmen posted on the roofs of adjoining houses.

But there was worse to come. After the "evictions", which had lasted several hours the police terror attained a new pitch of brutality. Hundreds of West Berliners protesting against the excesses were charged with truncheons, water cannon and tear gas. The "forces of law and order" made no distinction between chance bystanders and demonstrators. Indiscrimi-











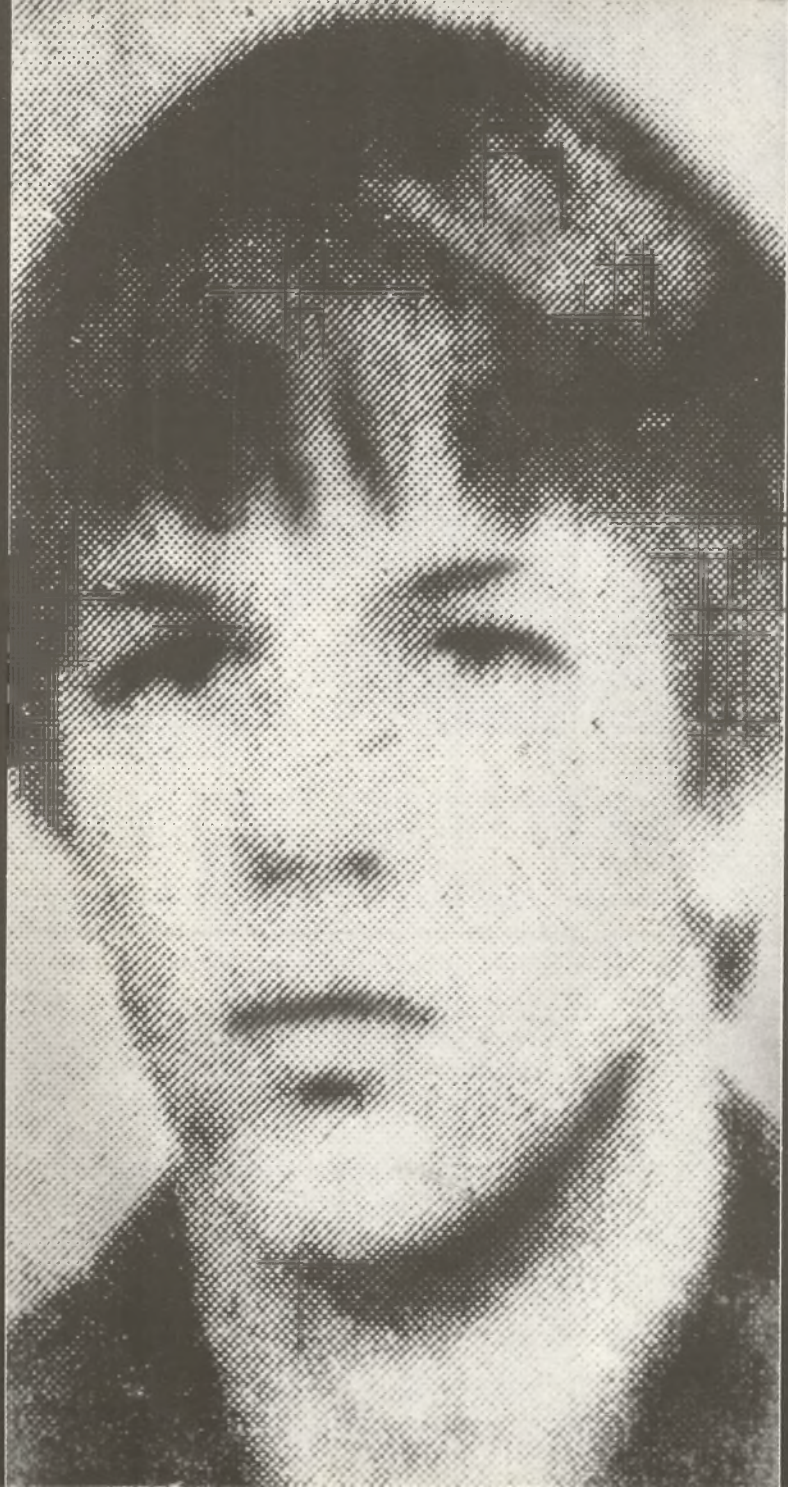
## Short biography of Klaus Jürgen Rattay

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Klaus Jürgen Rattay, the 18-year-old working-class lad murdered by West Berlin police, was described as a friendly and helpful young man by neighbours and friends in his native Kleve, North-Rhine-Westphalia. He had left home because on leaving school he did not have the slightest chance of finding employment in the region where he lived.

After many unsuccessful attempts to find a job in the Federal Republic, he tried his luck in West Berlin.

When heavily armed police moved against the demonstrators there, his father, a 39-year-old mechanic, was following the proceedings on television. He looked on in agony as his son lay lifeless on the ground and the police drove away those who wanted to help him. Mr Rattay collapsed and had to be taken to hospital.







nately, they swooped down on anyone unable to escape, including women with children and old people. So much for the morning.

In the afternoon the Senate member responsible, Heinrich Lummer, went to No. 89 Bülowstrasse to celebrate his "victory" at a provocative news conference. When, in the late hours of the day, way over 10,000 people joined a silent demonstration to protest against the murder of Klaus Jürgen Rattay, they too were the target of a wanton attack in which the police trampled down a wooden monument and tore apart bouquets of flowers.

Herr Lummer, for his part, heaped scorn on the victims of the police charge and announced further repressive action. Cynically, he observed that he did not consider his behaviour "in any way improper".

## Who is to blame for the squatting?

Does the blame lie with the young people who are branded as criminals, loafers, bums and antisocial elements by the Senate and by the papers of the press lord Axel Springer? Or does the blame lie with the Senate and its housing policy which enables the landlords to charge extortionate rents and developers, banks and insurance companies to speculate in real estate?

The truth is this:

- In West Berlin there are 80,000 people, most of them young, looking for accommodation.
- At the same time, 800 empty flats in West Berlin are allowed to go to rack and ruin.





- Rents for flats in older houses have risen by 200 per cent over the last 15 years so that they are out of the reach of young people.
- According to the plans of the CDU-dominated Senate rents in West Berlin are to go up by another 100 per cent.
- There are 2,500 unemployed building workers in West Berlin. Small wonder then, that jobless young people, students and newly-married couples have decided to move into houses which had been empty for years to establish something of a home there with the modest means at their disposal. One of them was the 18-year-old Klaus Jürgen Rattay.

He had to die as had others before him. On 7 November 1951 the railwayman Ernst Kamieth was beaten to death by a West Berlin police inspector named Hermann Zunker. On 2 June 1967 the student Benno Ohnesorg was shot from behind by detective sergeant Karl-Heinz Kurras during a demonstration protesting against the visit of the Shah. On 11 April 1968 student leader Rudi Dutschke was critically wounded when a right-wing extremist, Josef Bachmann, fired three shots on him. Dutschke died later without ever having fully recovered from the attempt on his life.

### **What price humanity**

when the political leadership of a city denies its own citizens the elementary right to a place to live?

### **What price freedom**

when legitimate criticism of the West Berlin Senate's social and housing policy is answered with baton charges, water cannon and tear gas?

### **What price democracy**

when police whose job it is to protect law and order are given instructions to go on the rampage against peaceful demonstrators, many of them in despair?





To ask these questions is to answer them in the light of what happened in a city whose leaders pay lip service to freedom, democracy and human rights every day; whose leaders ride roughshod over the property of the little man, but guard that of the well-to-do class which is the apple of their eye; whose leaders call on the people to tighten their belts when social services, education and health are involved, but who eagerly applaud any move to pump further millions into armaments.

They are the same men who invited US Secretary of State Alexander Haig to make provocative statements to revive the atmosphere of the days when West Berlin was considered a "front-line city" in the Cold War.



They are the same men who never tire of raising the spectre of the "threat from the East", although they should know better, and who keep feeding the West Berlin population with virulent anticommunist slogans.

The harrowing scenes of a September day speak for themselves.

West Berlin and its inhabitants are not threatened from outside, but from inside — by those who foment civil strife and seek to reincarnate the Cold War.

